

JOHN RAWN

Prominent Citizen

BY Emerson Hough

Author of "The Mississippi"

Subtle: 54-60 or Fight

Illustrations by Ray Walters

"It's getting cooler!" he exclaimed. "I'll fetch a wrap for you." And so hastened away, obsequious, uxorious as he always was with her.

"But Charley never would take any counsel from anybody," resumed he presently. "He's always been tractable enough, that's true; never raised much of a disturbance until tonight—don't see why he cut up so ugly now. He's not crazy over Grace, and if the truth be told, Grace isn't the sort of girl that a man would get crazy over. You're that sort."

"Perhaps not," she smiled faintly. "Just the same, Grace's attitude may have started him to thinking. When he began thinking he seemed to conclude that all the world was wrong. And he's starting in to set it right! He's going in for the uplift stunt, eh? That's the way with a lot of these reformers! They want to set the world right according to their own ideas. They don't pay any attention to the men who keep them from starving. I made that boy—that he's got to be over to me."

"Indeed! How singular! He says that it's just the other way about; that what you have you took from him! He says you want to take more—more than your share—from things that belong to everybody."

"What's that? What's that? Well, now, of all the insane idiosyncrasy I ever heard! Good God, what next! Him, Charles Halsey, the man I brought up with me! Jennie, I never heard the like of that in all my time."

"But if that's the way he feels, now's not the time to argue that with him!"

"But, good God, the effrontery—!"

"All the world is full of effrontery, Mr. Rawn," she said—continuing to address him formally, as she always did. "It's buy and sell. Everything we get we pay for in one way or another. Even if we took power out of the air by our overhead motors, we'd pay for that, one way or another."

"But He Didn't Impress You With That Nonsense, Jennie!"

"—nothing comes from nothing—we pay, we pay all the time, Mr. Rawn!"

"You don't need to go into theories and generalizations," said he testily. "We've had enough of that from him. We are both practical. You simply get that man and bring him back into the fold, that's all! Do your share."

"My share? It's easy, isn't it? She smiled at him again anxiously.

"But you can do it. But I can't evade the truth I just told you. I'd have to pay. You'd have to pay."

"We're beggars, and can't choose," said John Rawn savagely. "Besides, there's no harm done—I'm not asking you to do anything improper, anything to compromise yourself—but get him, that's all! And when we've got him in hand—when I know what I want to know—I'll wring him dry and throw him on the scrap heap. That's what I'll do with him!"

"Yes, I think you would," she said. "It's the only right thing to do."

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Rawn fumed. "He'll get what's coming to him. He's been throwing down his best friend."

"Are there any best friends in business, Mr. Rawn?" she asked.

"Of course there are. Haven't I been a friend to him; haven't I got a lot of friends of my own?"

"What would they do for you tomorrow, Mr. Rawn?"

"Well, that's a different matter; they might take care of themselves—I would take care of myself. But this fool here that I'm asking you to handle isn't taking care of himself or anyone else. He's crazy, that's all about him! Did he hand you out any of this talk about the rights of man? I more than half suspect him of sympathizing with these labor unions. He's a Socialist at heart, that's what he is!"

She nodded her head a little. "Names don't make much difference in such matters."

"Isn't it a funny thing," he rejoined, turning to her in his walk, "that the very men who have failed, the very ones who most need help themselves, are the ones who are out to help everybody else? The blind always want to lead the blind! These labor unions depend on us for their daily bread and butter, yet they want to fight us all the time. There's no trust in this country so big as the labor trust, and there's no ingratitude in the world like that of the laboring man's."

"Why, look at me, Jennie—you know something of my plans. This very month I was going to put fifty thousand dollars more into my co-operative farm in the south, a thing I have been working out for the benefit of my laboring people. I'm going to do more than old Carnegie has done! You and I ought to have set up some kind of prizes, medals—start some sort of hero competition. Helping colleges is old, and so are libraries old. I don't place myself any station back of Rockefeller himself. The Rockefeller Foundation was a great idea. Just wait! I'll raise him out of the game! When I get all my plans made, they'll speak of John Rawn when they mention philanthropy!"

"And just to think, Jennie," he went on excitedly, "that all such big plans for the good of humanity, should come to nothing! To be held up and handicapped by the folly of a man who has never been able to do anything for himself or anyone else! It makes me sick to think of it. He claims to be a friend of the laboring people, and here he's tying the hands of the greatest friend of the laboring men in this town today—myself, John Rawn, standing here! Why, if I'd hand this country the John Rawn Foundation for industrial assistance, all thought out, all financed, all ready to go to work tomorrow, that crazy fool there, with his Socialist ideas, would block it all. He's going to block it all."

"Now, it's up to you. You're the only one that can keep him from doing the very thing. Don't you see, isn't just you and me he's ruining. It isn't himself he's ruining. He's going to hurt the whole country. Jennie, there's considerable responsibility on you to-night. Where he is wrong is in thinking that the weak can help the weak. It's the other way about—it's the strong that can help—Power!—that's what counts! It's for you to show him that. Jennie, girl—it's not so much myself. But think of your country."

"Yes," she nodded, "that's precisely it!"

"But he didn't affect you in the least, Jennie—he didn't get you going with that kind of foolishness."

"I never heard any one talk just as he did, before," said she slowly. "You see, I hadn't thought of these things myself, for I'm only a woman. He said that all this power, taken from the hills and the forests and the air and the rivers, belongs to everybody—to all the world—"

"But he didn't impress you with that nonsense, Jennie!"

"He said things—I told him that I'd never thought of life just that way. And I haven't, Mr. Rawn. I told him, as I admit to you, that I hadn't thought of anybody much but myself—I just tried to climb. I think all women do."

"It's right they should, it's the only way. Selfishness is the one great cause of the world's progress, my dear."

"Well, I told him that his way of thinking was so new to me, that I needed time to think it over."

"But you didn't believe a word he said—you never would!"

"Mr. Rawn," said she, looking him full in the face, "we've both of us climbed pretty fast. I always put my family out of memory all I could. But somehow I seem to recollect that my father used to talk of things a good deal as Mr. Halsey does. I begin to realize what I told you a while ago—no matter how or where we climb, we pay for what we get, sometime, some where, somehow!"

"But listen," she leaned toward him with some sudden access of emotion. "I can do this much! I'll agree to bring in Charles Halsey, bound hand and foot! On the scrap heap when the time comes! It's a game. I'll play it. I'll take my chance." She half rose, thrilling, vibrant.

"I knew you would, Jennie."

"Yes, but you'll have to pay."

"Have I ever said I wouldn't? Didn't I just get done telling him I'd make him rich the minute he said the word?"

"It doesn't seem to be money he wants. I don't believe—that's what the pay would have to be."

"What do you mean? You're getting too deep for me now. I'm only a plain man, my girl!"

She smiled at him, still enigmatic, still cool and calm, still almost innocent, as she often was with him. "He's been talking all sorts of folly about

getting things in tune—getting gravitation in tune with labor—all sorts of abstractions. Well, don't you see, if I got in tune with his notions, I might be able to influence him!"

Rawn grew cold and hard. "There's one thing we can't do, Jennie," said he. "We can't side in with any of his socialistic talk. What he wants to do is to give to the people of this country for nothing what this International Power Company is planning to sell them for ever. What we want is monopoly! I've been gambling everything I've got on the certainty of that monopoly. I'm in a hole, in a hole, up to my eyes on the market, this minute. I'm margined to the full extent of my credit. The biggest men of America are back of me. I'll be rich if this thing goes through—one of the richest men in America. But I'd almost rather lose it all than to see you side in with him, or listen for five minutes to his rotten talk about the 'rights of man.' There are no rights of man except what each man can take for himself! As for him, I'd kill him, or get him killed, if I knew first how he got that current through the receivers. Give me that, and I'll let the rights of man wait a while. I'll show them a thing or two!"

"But of course," he added, frowning again in helpless perturbation, "we've got to get him in hand. Grace couldn't do it."

"No; on the contrary, I can—if I pay!"

"Then pay!" he snarled suddenly, his voice harsh, half choking. "What's the price—nothing worth mentioning. But it's got to be paid, no matter what it is. We're caught, and we're squeezed! We've got to pay, no matter what it is, Jennie!"

"Is it no matter to you, Mr. Rawn?"

"How can it be? I'm almost crazy to-night! Do it, that's all, and draw on me to the limit!"

"To the limit, Mr. Rawn?"

"To the limit!" He looked her straight in the eye, and she met his gaze fully. She shivered slightly again, but her delicately clean-cut face showed no further sign. Only she shivered, and pulled her wrap a trifle closer about her shoulders.

"Very well," she said. "I may have to draw on you—and myself, too."

"It's all in the game, Jennie—we've got to play it together—we're two of the same sort—we've got to climb, to succeed. We run well together. One must help the other's hand."

"Yes, it's a game," she answered; and so rose, and left him without further word.

John Rawn followed her up the stair, musing some sort of conjugal affection, but she left him at the landing and passed toward her own apartments down the hall, giving him hardly even a look of farewell. He followed her with his eyes, standing a little time, his hand resting on the lintel of his own door.

Alone, Rawn seated himself in the Elizabethan arm-chair devised by his most favored decorator as sitting for this Elizabethan room. A vast oak bed, heavily carved, with deep and heavy curtains, represented the decorator's idea of what the Virgin Queen preferred. The walls were deeply carved in wainscot and cornice. A rude attempt was made at strength and simplicity in this, the sanctum of the master of Graystone Hall. Granted the aid of a lively imagination, this might have been the apartment of some feudal lord of another day; as the designer and architect had not failed delicately to suggest to Mr. Rawn.

It is possible that in the time of Elizabeth, pier glasses with heavily carved frames were not common in the size affected by Mr. Rawn in his private apartment. He stood before the great glass now and gazed at what he saw; a face haggard and lined, shoulders stooping a little forward, body a little stooped, a little heavy, a little soft; the watch chain hanging in free air—the figure of a man no longer athletic, if ever so.

Rawn stood engaged in his regular nightly devotions—he made no prayers of eventide beyond that to his mirror. But now something he saw caused him to fling himself into a seat at a smaller glass, where the light was better. He gazed into this also, intently. Something seemed strange about his eyes, about his mouth. He turned his face slightly aside and decided the deep, triangular lines at the corner of the chin. He saw a roll of fat at the back of his neck, and observed a certain throatiness, a volubility of flesh below the chin. The latter stood out distinct, pushing forward—the rich man's chin, the old man's chin. He lifted a finger and touched the arteries on his temples. They were firmer to the touch than once they had been. He looked at the veins on his hands, and realized that they stood fuller than was once the case. His nose, large, just a trifle bulbous, seemed to him to have gained somewhat in color in late years. He looked at his eyes in eager questioning. Yes, they belonged to him! But for some reason they lacked brilliance and fire. They were colder, less impressive, less responsive;—the rich man's eyes, the old man's eyes. He looked at his hair, now almost white at the temples. He hesitated for a moment, then picked up a hand glass and deliberately turned his back to the mirror. Yes, it was there, a shiny spot of naked epidermis. He knew that, but always he shunned the knowledge and the proof. For many years his thick mane of wiry hair had been his pride.

John Rawn turned and put the hand mirror on the dresser top again. He looked full into the glass at his image once more. His pendulous lower lip drooped, tremulously. He saw his eyes winking. He saw something else. Yes, to his wonder, to his gasping horror, he saw something strange

and revolutionary! A tear was standing in the corner of his eye! It dropped, it trickled down his cheek!

John Rawn for the first time in his life was learning what the one game is—and learning that time is the one winner in that one game! He was old.

CHAPTER XVII.

An Informal Meeting.

It must surprise those simple folk Messieurs Washington, Jefferson, and their like, were they to return to life at this advanced age and gaze upon the admirable republic which they fancied to be founded on immutable principles. As in politics to-day those principles would seem proved to have been wholly different from those known in that earlier day. For instance, in commercial matters, the men of that day would now find in daily application a fourth dimension of affairs once wholly unknown; the sixth sense of the modern business man, a delicately differentiated faculty evolved in the holy of holies where events cast their financial shadows far in advance of themselves. John Jay, or any financier of Revolutionary time, very likely lacked in that regard, and had but five senses.

This keen sense of prophecy, property of modern leaders in finance, was not lacking in the case of the directors of the International Power Company, all and several; and more especially several. Capitalists hunt in packs—but only up to a certain point. The suave cut pant has small chivalry about it even in the holy of holies.

Within a few days after the turbulent scenes which took place in the quiet surroundings of Graystone Hall, there was held, quite informally, indeed on a wholly impromptu basis, a meeting of the greater portion of the directors of the International Power Company. It was a meeting not called by the president, and the president knew nothing of it. It was not set for the usual headquarters in the East; on the contrary, by merest chance, these keen-witted men met by accident in the western city where were located the works and central operating offices of the International Power Company. They made their stopping place, as usual, at the National Union Club, where they were less certain to become the prey of prying reporters—a breed detested above all things by these and their like.

There was, this afternoon, casually present, a certain gray-haired, full-bodied man, of full beard and rather portly body. He was speaking with President Standley, of St. Louis, who also by merest chance happened to be in town. To them presently came the former general traffic manager of Mr. Standley's own road, Ackerman, also present by merest accident. Two or three others, moreover, by mere accident, joined them, figures which were familiar at the long table in the New York headquarters. They looked at one another frankly, and laughed without much reservation.

"Well," said Ackerman, after a time, "let's sit down and have a little pow-wow—informally, you know."

The gray-haired man grinned pleasantly again and said nothing, but drew up a chair.

"Of course, you know," said Standley, as he seated himself, "that our disaffected friend, Van, is here in town to-day."

The full-bearded man nodded, and an instant later jerked his head toward the door. "He's here in the club, too," said he, and smiled. "Just happened in, I suppose." Indeed, as they turned to look they saw advancing, talking animatedly, a rather slender, youngish man of brown eyes and pointed beard; none less than the disgruntled director who had long ago been so summarily handled by John Rawn, president of the International Power Company.

"Hasn't he got the nose for news, though?" commented Standley admiringly.

"There's Most Always a Lady Standing Around Somewhere."

"Now, who told him there was anything doing?"

"He didn't need to have anybody tell him," growled Ackerman. "He can take care of himself. And by Jove! I'm half inclined to think that he was the lucky one to get out the way he did, and when he did."

"Yes, he's lucky," said Standley gravely. He turned to see the vast round belly of the gray-bearded man heaving in silent mirth. The railway magnate obviously was amused.

"I don't know!" remarked Ackerman suddenly. "Others, eh?"

"Well, boys, why not admit it?" rejoined the older man. "We all know the facts. We all know why we're here. As you said, Ack, let's hold a little informal meeting, and talk over what we had better do!"

"How much did you sell?" demanded Standley casually.

"Twenty thousand last week. You sold about double that."

"Yes, it's leaking out, no use denying that! You don't need to list this thing—it leaks!"

"Of course, Van's buying it," said Standley, nodding toward the slender figure of the ex-director. "First time I ever knew him to go out for revenge it doesn't very often pay."

"Well, I can't figure it out," ventured Ackerman. "The stock won't do him any more good than it does us. He can't get control over that old boogie-head Rawn—I mean our respected president—anyhow, any more than we can. He's sitting tight, with the papers in his box. I admit that I let go a little, because I figured it was time we were doing something better than six per cent. with that stock, and all Rawn has done is to make one explanation on top of another. He can't keep on putting that across with me, anyhow. But he can sit there, as I say, with the control in his hands, looking at those nice pictures of the Lady of the Lightnings, which he had engraved as our trademark."

"He's awfully gone on her," spoke up one. "Not that I blame him, either. I hate to sell my stock, because I like the looks of our engraved goddess so much!"

"There's most always a lady standing around somewhere, with the lightning in her hands," ventured the gray-bearded man solemnly. They looked at one another again suggestively, but no one spoke more definite words than that.

"Well, we've had high-sounding talk put up to us about long enough," commented Ackerman, at length. "I was one of the first to go in for this, and I believe in it yet, but I don't want this thing with Rawn in control. Why, look at him—he was just a clerk when he came to us, and here he's putting on more side than any other man in the town. He's taken advantage of his situation to play the market in and out, all the time, which couldn't have done it if it hadn't been for friends like us. He squeezed us into backing him—after we gave him that little flyer in Rubber, and some Oil—that hadn't cost us anything and didn't look worth anything. In return he's handed us promises and explanations and hot air, and nothing else. I've just got an idea that there's a man-sized nigger somewhere around this woodpile. For me, I prefer being hung as a little lamb rather than as a full-sized goat. Yes, I let go a little International—Van—I'll admit. Time enough to get back into the game when we've put Rawn out!"

Standley nodded slowly. "That's a good deal the way I felt about it," he said. "It rises me to see the airs that fellow puts on. I remember him when he didn't have two suits of hand-me-down clothes to his name, and now he seems to have a hundred, all done by the best tailors in New York. He used to tie his drawers with white tape strings, and now he wears specially shaped silks. Where'd he get it? You talk about the Keeley motor—this thing has got it beat a mile for mystery. And we fellows have been standing for that! That is, unless we can stand from under, somehow."

"Yes, seemingly," ventured the last speaker. "But how is that somehow? There isn't any market for International."

The gray-bearded man laughed jubilantly at this. "Have you found that out?"

"Yes, I certainly have found it out. Of course, the market has been Van-yonder. But he won't take on over a certain amount. He wants to break the control, of course. But he's going to wait until he gets up to the point and then do something quick. He's not going to hold our bag for us—oh, no! Not him!"

"Well, I've a suspicion," said the older man finally, "that that secret we've been after has been in the hands of our superintendent for a long time."

"Why didn't Rawn tell us, then?" demanded one of his companions. "Has he sold us out?"

"No, Rawn hasn't sold us out. At least I don't think so."

"Who has, then?"

"I don't know. The young man who made the wheels go for us whenever Rawn wanted him to—he's the real key to this situation, if I'm a good guesser. There's your contraband, and you can locate him somewhere in this particular woodpile, or I'm no judge."

"Rawn's pretty well spread out in the general market," quite irrelevantly suggested Standley.

"I should say he was!" growled Ackerman. "He's been in on all the good things in the last two or three years. He must have made millions—I don't know how much."

"In the general market—not International, of course. He's got all his holdings in that. He has been spending money, though!" Standley wagged his head.

"For instance, on the Lady of the Lightnings?" suggested Ackerman, grinning amiably.

"Yes, on his young wife, and his new house, and his boats, and his automobiles, and all the regular things. He can't have done it out of International dividends, that's sure!"

"All the better that he hasn't," ventured Standley. The old man nodded. "Go over there and call Van," he said simply.

The slender man with pointed beard came up pleasantly, his eyes twinkling. "Well, my fellow sports and department heads!" he said. "What's the good word this morn'g?"

"Sit down," said the gray-bearded man. "We know why you're here, and why you've been hanging around here for the last six months. It's foolish."

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